An article I read as a child has stayed in my memory for years. It was an interview with a person who was born blind and was never able to see. The interviewer asked, “What is the color red?” The blind person responded, “I think it should be something like the sound of a trumpet.” An intriguing thought, isn’t it?

Assistive technologies have been invaluable in simplifying the lives of people with disabilities. Technologies for improving sight, hearing, and motion have made significant strides in easing the lives of those with physical challenges. However, what about enabling people completely deprived of one of the senses to experience something they have been missing all of their lives? In other words, it’s great that we can provide indispensable tools for text-to-speech or technologies for enhancing reading by the visually impaired. The challenge is much greater, though, to create completely new experiences.

For most of us, color may not correlate with sound the way it did for that blind person. Call it imaginative or farfetched, but there may be more to this than just one person’s imagination. Many of us do experience various forms of synesthesia—that ability to blend interpretations from our senses and cultivate a unique experience. If nothing else, we should be intrigued as researchers at this phenomenon and show interest in exploring how to apply it to mixed media.

How can we create multimedia compositions offering new experiences as a sensory medium to a person who hasn’t experienced it throughout his or her life? What kinds of tools and technologies do we need? How should artists view this type of opportunity? What’s the role for anthropologists, psychologists, social scientists, and biologists? If we could assemble an interdisciplinary group like this, who should run the show? The artist? The neurologist? The engineer? Does it matter?

As always, I’m continuously interested in hearing your response to my ponderings as a reader, a colleague, and a researcher. Your comments, suggestions, news, and reports are always interesting.

Trumpeting on a different note, I’m pleased to introduce two new editorial board members. As their biographies indicate, they’re highly qualified. I look forward to seeing what their unique perspectives will bring to MultiMedia. Tsuhan Chen and Chang Wen Chen, welcome aboard! MM

Tsunan Chen is a professor and director of the Advanced Multimedia Processing Laboratory at Carnegie Mellon University. His research interests include include multimedia signal processing and communication, implementation of multimedia systems, multimodal biometrics, audio-visual interaction, processing and retrieval of 2D/3D graphics, bioinformatics, and building collaborative virtual environments. Chen received his BS in electrical engineering from the National Taiwan University, and his MS and PhD in electrical engineering from the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California. He currently also serves as the editor in chief of IEEE Transactions on Multimedia. He is a recipient of the Charles Wilts Prize for outstanding independent research in electrical engineering as well as the National Science Foundation Career Award.

Chang Wen Chen is currently the Allen S. Henry Distinguished Professor and director of the Wireless Center of Excellence at the Florida Institute of Technology. His research interests include image analysis, image and video coding, video streaming, wireless multimedia, mobile communication, and wireless sensor networks. Chen received his BS from the University of Science and Technology, China; his MS from University of Southern California; and his PhD from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a senior member of the IEEE and is an associate editor for IEEE Transactions on Circuits and Systems for Video Technology as well as IEEE Transactions on Multimedia.